NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
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FRED GALVAN

PANAMA TREATY -- RIGHT ON COURSE

ANNCR:

PANAMA AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE JOINTLY REPORTED TO THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING IN SANTIAGO, CHILE, ON THE PROGRESS OF THEIR NEGOTIATIONS ON A NEW PANAMA CANAL TREATY. NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS:

VOICE:

IT'S A SLOW BUT STEADY PROCESS -- THAT'S THE GIST OF THE AMERICAN-PANAMANIAN REPORT. SOME DIFFERENCES HAVE BEEN RESOLVED OVER THE TWELVE MONTHS SINCE A SIMILAR REPORT WAS OFFERED TO THE LAST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES. BUT AS THIS YEAR'S REPORT SAYS: "DIFFERENCES REMAIN ... ON TWO IMPORTANT ISSUES: THE PERIOD OF DURATION OF THE NEW TREATY AND THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE LAND AND WATER AREAS COMPRISING THE PRESENT PANAMA CANAL ZONE."

WHILE THIS YEAR'S WORDING DIFFERED LITTLE FROM LAST YEAR'S PRESENTATION BY PANAMA AND THE UNITED STATES, THERE IS AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION TO BEAR IN MIND. THIS YEAR'S NEGOTIATIONS TOOK PLACE AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF A HEATED AMERICAN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN, IN WHICH PRESIDENT FORD'S RIVAL FOR THE REPUBLICAN PARTY'S NOMINATION, RONALD REAGAN, MADE THE PANAMA TREATY TALKS AN ISSUE.

MANY PANAMANIANS AND LATIN AMERICANS -- AND NORTH AMERICANS, TOO -- FEARED THAT THE RESULTING DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURES WOULD SLOW OR ACTUALLY BRING TO A HALT THE FORD ADMINISTRATION'S TREATY EFFORT. BUT THE REPORT ISSUED IN

SANTIAGO YESTERDAY (WEDNESDAY) MAKES CLEAR THAT THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED.

TRUE, THE NEGOTIATIONS, AS THEY HAVE ALL ALONG, HAVE BEEN PROCEEDONG AT WHAT SOME PEOPLE WOULD CALL A SNAIL'S PACE. BUT BOTH PANAMA AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE MAINTAINED THAT THE ISSUE IS SO COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT THAT ANY FASTER PACE WOULD RISK THE DRAFTING OF A TREATY UNACCEPTABLE TO THE PEOPLE OF EITHER COUNTRY.

THE JOINT REPORT ONCE MORE SPELLED OUT WHAT BOTH COUNTRIES ARE SEEKING THROUGH THEIR NEGOTIATIONS. IT IS TO DRAFT A TREATY THAT IS JUST AND EQUITABLE, THAT WILL BALANCE NOT ONLY THE INTERESTS OF PANAMA AND THE UNITED STATES, BUT OF THE REST OF THE HEMISPHERE AND THE WORLD SO AS TO REMOVE ANY FUTURE POTENTIAL CAUSES OF CONFLICT. THE REPORT CONCLUDES THAT SUCH A TREATY WOULD GO FAR TOWARD CONSOLIDATING PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP AMONG ALL PEOPLES.

(OPT) AND SO, WHILE SOME WOULD PREFER A FASTER PACE IN THE TALKS, THEY MIGHT WELL RECALL THE AESOPIAN FABLE ABOUT THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE, AND THE VALUE OF PATIENT PERSISTENCE. (END OPT) IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT THE MEASURED RHYTHM OF THE TALKS BETWEEN PANAMA AND THE UNITED STATES SHOULD BE VIEWED.

FOR, AS PANAMA'S FOREIGN MINISTER AQUILINO BOYD SAID IN READING THE REPORT TO HIS WESTERN HEMISPHERE COLLEAGUES, "IT IS IN THIS SENSE THAT BOTH GOVERNMENTS ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH THE CONCEPT EXPRESSED BY GENERAL TORRIJOS (FYI: PANAMA'S CHIEF OF STATE) THAT WE ARE NOT SIMPLY SEEKING ANY NEW TREATY -- WE ARE SEEKING," HE SAID "A TREATY THAT WILL FULLY MEET OUR COMMON GOALS IN THE FUTURE AND BE SEEN BY OUR SISTER REPUBLICS AS REFLECTING A NEW ERA OF COOPERATION IN THE AMERICAS."

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